

Pastor Lynn will facilitate a study of the book, Everything Happens for a Reason: Finding the True Meaning of the Events in Our Lives by Mira Kirshenbaum. The study will begin Wednesday June 15 at 10 am. The author's premise is that "that no matter what happens to you, not only does something valuable come out of it but it's just what you need." Kirshenbaum details in separate chapters the 10 possible life lessons one might learn from unhappy life events, ranging from self-acceptance, feeling at home in the world and letting go of fear to finding true love or your hidden talents. Readers answer diagnostic questions to determine which lesson might be theirs. There is also a wealth of advice, such as a seven-step method to overcome fear and a list of the 10 elements of true love."

For those who are not familiar with Kirshenbaum or her background, she was born to Holocaust survivors to a Jewish family shuffled across Europe and Asia until they finally were settled in New York. Most of her extended family did not survive the invasion of Poland or the Holocaust.

A professional psychologist and researcher Kirshenbaum struggled herself to find the meaning for the Holocaust and the things that happened to her own family. She actually gave up for a long time and adopted a posture that it didn't mean anything, that today was all that counted. Then one day her work with a client reopened this issue of meanings in a new way she had not considered.

Previously she had tried to make direct correlations between the bad event and what the person got from the event. In this client's case, the thing he realized he needed to see about himself had nothing to do with the bad event; the bad event just put him in a position to see that he needed work in a particular area of his personal development.

This renewed vision that things happen for a reason in our lives launched Kirshenbaum on a quest for people who had discovered reasons for the things that happened in their lives happened. She discovered that people often find a reason why they went through what happened to them; and the reason or reasons tend to relate to one or more of ten categories like fear, strength, hidden talent, personal mission and others.

In my own situation I found more than one category applied and that it was a mix of things hidden and things needing work. The three strong areas that the assessment questions revealed were likely reasons for things happening had to do with fear and letting it go, strengthening my core qualities, and accepting myself unconditionally.

Many reading this have strong religious connections especially in the conservative evangelical Christian doctrinal lines. My own background is rooted in Christianity and I write from my experience of faith even if I do not quote chapter and verse. Probably some reading this wonder why I would read a book written by a non-Christian when I could find an answer to my question in the Bible. The short answer is that sometimes a fresh perspective can help us see things better. Kirshenbaum's book is not a substitute for the Bible or any religious text and for me her points would not have been as insightful if I had not had a strong foundation of faith.

Kirshenbaum seems to take pains to be faith-neutral in her language, although her term "cosmic kindergarten" might raise issues with those who avoid anything to do with the New Age

Movement. I made a choice to step over the language issue and hear her heart intent which I interpret as helping people get unstuck from a bad event, embrace the reason, and live the full life they are given. I can find no conflict with the Bible on that score and there are numerous examples of Jesus meeting people with a similar message.

The most important lesson Kirshenbaum writes that she learned through her research was that bad events do not have only bad meanings. We may talk about silver linings, or point out that Joseph saw his brothers' bad plans for him were actually part of God's good plan for him. But the bulk of what gets emphasized in faith circles when something bad happens is all the bad things that will be the fallout from it. It was refreshing to hear someone say that silver linings are part of the plan not just happy accidents if we're lucky. That point alone reinforces my hope for my own future as I move forward.

The book is a fast read if you just read it. It is, however, a workbook of sorts. In each chapter of part two she introduces one of the categories with an example, then gives the assessment questions, and then follows up with suggestions for those who find that category relates to their situation. I should mention that Kirshenbaum points out that just because your example matches one in the book it does not indicate your meaning will be the same.

Mira Kirshenbaum has written a number of books to help people make sense of the events in their lives. You can check out her titles and her work at the [Chestnut Hill Institute](#) online.

from G's Cottage by Deb..

<http://gscottage.blogspot.com/2009/08/book-review-everything-happens-for.html>